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The Popular Religion of the Hebrews from the Nomadic Period to the Babylonian Exile

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		page
	PREFACE	1
I	INTRODUCTION	
	1. The Span of this Thesis is from the Nomadic Desert home to the time of the Exile in Babylon.	3
	2. Attention given to Nomadic Background is relatively limited.	3
	3. Attention given to Canaanite Background involves more extensive research.	4
	4. The Period of the Canonical Prophets affords more possibilities for research.	5
	5. The General sources which are available.	6
II	THE NOMADIC BACKGROUND	
	1. Who were the Semites?	8
	2. A description of the Nomads in their home in the desert.	9

Chapter page

3. The binding of clans together through the bond of the blood covenant. 11

4. Religious Beliefs of the Nomads are moulded by Environment: 11

a. The prominence of the idea of fertility. 12

b. Sacredness of trees, etc. 13

c. Reverence for the Serpent. 16

d. Mysteries of the sky. 17

e. Circumcision. 18

f. Summary. 19

5. Various waves of Migrations from the desert described. 20

III THE CANAANITE BACKGROUND

1. Introduction to the Canaanite Background. 24

2. The Semitic Origin of the Canaanites. 26

3. The difficulties faced in attempting to ascertain pure Canaanite influences. 27

4. What was the Religion of Canaan?

Chapter page

a. The Worship at the High Places: 28

(1) The Temple of Thothmes III. 29

(2) Other Temples mentioned. 32

(3) Acceptance of Canaanite Shrines by Hebrews. 34

(4) A General survey of the outstanding characteristics of the high place. 35

b. Priests, and their obligations. 37

c. Divination:

(1) By Arrow 40

(2) By Oracle Tree. 40

d. Gods of Canaan:

(1) Chemosh. 41

(2) Dagon. 41

(3) Host of Heaven. 42

(4) Baalim. 42

e. Ceremonies considered an abomination to Yahweh. 43

f. Agricultural Festivals of Canaanite origin. 45

g. Evidence of Human Sacrifice. 48

Chapter page

IV THE PROPHETIC PERIOD

1. The controversy over the extent of the Prophetic period. 51

2. Actual existing practices observed.

a. The High Place:

(1) Protest by Deuteronomy. 53

(2) Typified by Gezer: 54

(a) Oracles. 55

(b) Masseboth. 56

(c) "Nehushtan". 59

(d) The Altar. 60

(e) Incense Altars. 61

(3) The worship of Astarte. 63

(4) The practise of Human Sacrifice. 66

(5) A discussion of Sacred animals: 71

(a) A red Cow. 71

(b) Cult of the Dead. 73

(c) The Mouse. 73

(d) The Swine. 74

(e) The Bull. 75

Chapter page

V CONCLUSION

1. Sources not entirely dependable. 78

2. All peoples should be judged against the background of their own standards of morality. 78

3. A developmental interpretation is essential. 81

BIBLIOGRAPHY 82

PREFACE

In a Seminar designated as "The Minor Prophets of the Old Testament", conducted under the auspices of the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Calif., and under the direct leadership and inspiration of Professor George P. Hedley Th D., there was assigned to me, as a subject for special research, "The Popular Religion of the Hebrews During the Prophetic Period".

Delving into this particular study I became acutely aware of some of the numerous possibilities and problems involved. In referring to the problems, the extensiveness of the field was discovered to be utterly incompatible with a brief resume, and an understanding of the religious practices of the Hebrews in Palestine during the Prophetic Period was found to necessitate careful attention to religious practices in times preceding the ninth century. The possibilities revealed an extensive discovery of fascinating phenomena; and the tracing of a normal and natural religion of the common Hebrew people, this development harmonizing with

a gradual advancing civilization.

It is especially the latter possibility, that of portraying a natural religious growth of Hebrew Popular Religion, which has challenged my enthusiasm and it is with this thought uppermost in mind that I proceed with my Thesis.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

For generations attention has been focused on the religion of the Hebrews as expressed through the prophets. The ideals and protests of the prophets have generally been considered to concur with those of the common people, the prophets being in reality a mouthpiece of the populace. This is an erroneous idea for the prophets are on one level of thought, extremely high - the idealistic; while the common people are on another - the pragmatic. It is this pragmatic level of actual experience which attracts our exclusive interest. The idealistic will be taken into consideration only in so far as it involves the pragmatic - or to speak more specifically in the case of religious practices revealed through the protests of the prophets.

In dealing with the religious practices the span of Hebrew history from the Nomadic Wanderings in the desert of Arabia to the Exile in Babylon must be taken into account; otherwise such a thesis, becoming only a group

of isolated facts, would be devoid of any real value.

The Nomadic Background merits relatively limited attention because of the scanty amount of data discoverable in this field. Our task here is that of drawing conclusions from these facts and relating them to the study as a whole - by showing traces of permanent influence, using this Nomadic Background as a premise upon which to build the thesis.

The problem of the Canaanitish Background is somewhat different from that of the Nomadic, involving more extensive research. This research is rewarded in part by a few definite, and many speculative, findings of Archaeology. These conclusions of Archaeology in connection with Biblical records throw some light on the Canaanite Religion as practiced and as modifying Hebrew Religious behavior, and on the direct and indirect transmision of foreign influence into Hebrew thinking. Through this whole period and continuing down to the time of the prophets and even later, there can be seen a decided transition taking place in Hebrew Popular Religion - a change from habits typical of extreme simplicity and isolation on the sands of the desert to

those of a more complex civilized life of Agriculture.

During the periods of the Canonical prophets more Archaeological treasures and Biblical records are thrust upon us than during any previous period. This fact coupled with the growing complexity of Social, Political, Intellectual and Religious developments has made this span of time one of intense interest. Thus the most important place in our study will be devoted to the Prophetic period, limited for our purpose to ca. 750 B.C. to 597 B.C.

Looking back through the gradual process of development one cannot help but feel the normal growth of Hebrew popular religion, each stage introducing new ideas while contimually carrying on traces and influences from the past. It is a consciousness of this normal development that forces us to take the attitude in this Thesis, that a naturalistic and Psychological interpretation of religion is essential - one which looks upon all religion as a process of development, a view that everything constituting civilization is rising to a higher level or as Barton[1] phrases it "progressive"

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[1]Geo. A. Barton, The Religion of Israel, p. 1.

and "evolutionary" "revelation".

The primary source for the study of the Religion of the Hebrews is found in the Old Testament.[1] In this record we have a collection of books which in totality represent in brief the historic span of Hebrew religious experience. This collection included histories, stories, legal codes, ritual directions, songs, proverbs, philosophy and sermons.

This varied literature can be used, for our purpose only under certain conditions. Foremost there must be consideration in regard to date and ideas of the special narrative strata - J, E, D, P. A careful critical analysis must then be made of the contents. Is the material under special study only an ancient oral legend, a part of contemporary history, or a mixture of the two? Much allowance must be made for re-editing, not only in later works but also within the J, E, D, and P Documents themselves. For example, a fragment of the ancient Code of Laws of Moses was incorporated in the Judean records of Exodus 34.12-26, and preserved to a greater extent in Israelite History in Exodus 21-23.

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[1]Reference will be made entirely to the American Standard of 1901 unless otherwise indicated.

Another or supplementary field to which we can turn for information is that of Archaeology. It is here that we find not a few helpful discoveries not always dependable or permanent, but at least suggestive and often of real value.

It is through Archaeology that we can delve into the ancient times of the children of Israel; that we can discover the relative influences of surrounding nations upon Palestine - i.e. Canaan, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and Armenia; that some of the probable contributions of other nations upon Israel can be brought to light - i.e. Babylon and Egypt; and that the remains of closely related primitive civilizations can be uncovered - i.e. Arab, and Phoenician, thus eventually making possible the discovery of the actual religious practices of the Hebrews themselves.

Chapter II

THE NOMADIC BACKGROUND

Turning away from the Hebrews of Palestine and glancing into the ancient past, one catches a glimpse of the Israelites as they once existed in their antecedent environment in the northern portions of the Arabian Desert. This Desert in all probability was not their original home, but it was their dwelling for a sufficient length of time to have a moulding influence upon their temperament. The conditions of their life before this time are with insufficient data, impossible to determine.

The Hebrews were not the only ones living in the North Arabian Desert, rather they were a part of a group of peoples called Semites.[1]

"By the 'Semites' is generally understood the group of peoples known today as the Aramaeans (Syrians, etc.) in the north, Babylonians and the Assyrians in the East,

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[1]The term "Semite" is inadequate being derived from Shem, a son of Noah, the hero of the deluge, (Gen. 9).

Arabs in the South and the Phoenicians, Hebrews, Moabites etc. in the West.

"They are the inhabitants of the region bounded by the Taurus and the mountains of Armenia and Iran, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. The area has been well described as a 'fertile crescent'. It is approximately a semi-circle, open to the South, with the mountains behind and, in front, the desert with its Oases and scanty grass-lands; the right horn of the crescent stretches along the Mediterranean, the left reaches the Persian Gulf. And by a not too bold generalization the history of south-west Asia has been styled 'an age long struggle between the mountain peoples of the north and the desert-wanderers of the grass-lands - a struggle which is still going on - for the possession of the Fertile Crescent'".[1]

The home of the Semites in the desert was a fascinating one to the wandering Bedawin tribes, with nothing but the sky overhead and the sand beneath and their own impulses to control their destinies. For a

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[1]S. A. Cook, in an article on "The Semites", Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 1, Chapt. V, p. 182.

time roving the desert sands, and then again plundering a small settlement on a beautiful oasis to take possession, adding to their own belongings of goats, camels and asses, till they in turn were driven off to make a new start - half reluctant to leave their new home and half enthralled by the romantic call of unknown adventures, "especially when in his green oasis the wild bard of the desert chanted the raids of past heroes. So he takes to the desert once more, perhaps to gain renown as a robber, perhaps merely to be a caravan leader".[1]

These green oases of the desert, being but few in number, were subject to frequent molestation. Here the grass for the goats and the camels, the fresh spring water, the small amount of tillable soil was the object of desire for many a wandering Bedawin tribe. For this reason one would see the young and more hardy men leading their flocks out on the pasture lands, where at the same time continual watch could be kept for the sight of maurading nomads; while those who were older and weaker aided the women in keeping the tents and cultivating the date palms.

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[1]Olmstead, History of Assyria, p. 3.

In this economic struggle to gain possession of necessary fertile spots of the otherwise barren sands was produced the clan type of society.[1] In such a society the clans were bound together by strong ties of kinship or of blood, including as members such strangers as accepted the blood covenant[2] of the particular group and the deity, all of whom were under obligation to fulfill the law of blood revenge.[3]

Side by side with the strong element of blood revenge were the acts of communion and fellowship at meals which made the clan and their deities one. "The very act of eating and drinking with a man was a symbol and a confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligations."[4] "If I have eaten the smallest morsel of food with a man, I have nothing further to fear from him, 'there is salt between us' and he is bound not only to do me no harm, but to help and defend

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[1]Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 33; Geo. A. Barton, Semitic Origins, p. 33.

[2]Ex. 24.4-8.

[3]H. P. Smith, The Religion of Israel, p. 43; Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites; Gen. 9.4, 42.22, 4,23ff, I K. 2.32, 21.19.

[4]Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 269.

me as if I were his brother."[1]

It is in this social group of the clan that one finds the beginnings of a civilization, however crude, and the beginnings of a religious experience, be it primitive as it may. Also, one finds an inter-dependence of religion, social ideas and economic necessities, the economic factor forcing the clan into existence, which existence necessitates a certain set of customs which in turn produce certain beliefs, based on common interest and habits.

It is to these beliefs, dependent on social customs and economic necessities, that we shall now turn, realizing that these beliefs are common among all Semitic Peoples faced by the same type of existence.

It is natural to suppose the underlying principle of social relationships in a nomadic existence to have been that of a bond of kinship, for unity alone made the preservation of life possible. Such a bond of kinship, to individuals who lacked knowledge and certainty, necessarily included a deity. The characteristics of this deity would be moulded by the environment of the

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[1]Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 270. See also Josh. 9.15.

Semitic mind, the dominant factor being that of fertility. This is possibly a bold statement but not improbable when one accepts the theory of a Matriarchial Society[1], a society accepting unregulated intercourse[2], and a society which was conscious of the important function of the date palm and its process of fertilization. In such a society, the supreme deity was the goddess Mother Earth[3]

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[1]Geo. A. Barton, Art., "Semites", Ency. Rel. & Ethics;
Paton, The Early Religion of Israel, p. 6;
H. P. Smith, The Religion of Israel, p. 41;
Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites;
Cook, notes to 3rd Edition of R. Smith, The Religion of the Semites.
Wellhausen claims that J traces descent through the mother.

[2]Geo. A. Barton, Semitic Origins, pp. 42-43;
Palgrave, Central and Eastern Arabia, Vol. II, p. 267 cites instances of sex freedom today among Mohammedans;
Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage, pp. 145-163;
Dt. 23.17-18, Am. 2.8, Gen. 30.4.

[3]Langdon, Tammuz and Ishtar, p. 5;
Traces of the worship of the goddess Mother Earth, under other names if found among later Semitic peoples after migrations - i.e. the Ishtar Cult of Assyria, Babylonia, North and South Arabia, Canaanites, Ethiopia, Nabathoea, Moab, Hebrews, Phoenician, - Barton, Semitic Origins, p. 83. In Babylonia, Arabia and Cyprus virgins are required to sacrifice their chastity by an act of free love. It is most probable that the harlots of Israel were loyal inheriters of the ancient tradition of free love for women.

who as a deity of fertility was a residential part of the Oasis with its never failing spring[1] and its ever living vegetation. Within the oasis were the accompanying spirits living in the strange rocks, in the trees, bushes and in the water, being such a part of the oasis that they became localized.[2]

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[1]Barton, Semitic Origins, pp. 86-87, cites reasons.

[2](a) Some of the trees considered sacred by the Hebrews were:

(1) The Terebinth - Gen. 12.6-8, 13.18, 14,13, Josh. 24.26-27, Ex. 21,7-8, Jud. 9.6, 6.11.

(2) The Date Palm - Gen. 38, Ex. 15.27, Jud. 4.5, 20.33, 1.16, 3.13, Dt. 34.3, Ez. 41.18, I Sam. 14.2, 22.6.

(3) The Oak - Gen. 35.8, Jud. 4.11,

(4) The Pomegranate - I Sam. 14,2.

(b) Some of the springs considered sacred by the Hebrews were:

(1) Chazazon-Tamar - "the Spring of the Kid", Gen. 14.7, II Chr. 20.2.

(2) En-eglain - "the Spring of the Two calves", I K. 12.29,32, II K. 10.29, 17.15.

(3) En-ha-Kore - "the Spring of the Dragon", Neh. 2.13.

(c) Some of the wells considered sacred by the Hebrews were:

(1) Beersheba - "Wells of the Seven" or "Seven Wells", Gen. 21.22-23, 26.24.

Even Arabia of today[1] ascribes sacredness to trees, if we are to accept Doughty's thrilling accounts of his travels in Arabia[2].

"I went to cut tent-pegs at the great solitary acacia tree which stands nigh the kella - - - . Hither I saw Doolan leading his flock, and waited to ask him for his bill, or else that he would cut down the sticks for me. He answered, 'Wellah, O son of mine uncle, ask

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(2) Be'er-lahai-roe - "The God who sees", changed to the "Well of my seeing and (yet) living", Gen. 16.14.

(3) Ba'alath be'er - "The Mistress of the Well", Josh. 19.8.

"In Palestine to this day all springs are viewed as the seats of spirits, and the peasant women, whether Moslem or Christian, ask their permission before drawing water", - Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites, p. 169 n 3.

(d) Running water was considered sacred by the Hebrews: Jud. 5.21; I K. 1.33,34; Dt. 21.4.

(e) Particular stones were considered sacred by the Hebrews: Josh. 24.26; 4.3,8; Gen. 28.10-22; Ex. 24.4,6-8.

[1] Doughty, Arabia Deserta, Vol. I, p. 365.

[2] According to accounts related by Dr. G. P. Hedley and Dr. W. F. Bade in class lectures at the Pacific School of Religion, Tree Cults still survive at the present time in Palestine.

me anything else, but in this there is mischief for us both. No! I pray thee, break not, Khalil, nor cut so much as a twig of all these branches, thou art not of this country, thou art not aware: look up! seest thou the cotton shreds and the horns of goats which hang in these boughs, they are of the Beduw, but many fell in the late winds. And seest thou these nails! certain of the Haj knocked them into the stem whilst they pray!' As I laid hand anew on a good bough and took my knife, Doolan embraced me. 'No! Khalil, the man who cuts this tree, he said, must die! - - - 'What is this folly! are you afraid of trees?' 'Ah me! she is possessed by a jin; be not so foolhardy. Wullah, I tell thee truth, a Beduwy broke but a bough and he died within a while and all his castle perished. Khalil, the last evening a little girl of the booth that is newly pitched here, gathered some of these fallen sticks, for her mother's fire, and as they kindled, by-thy-life! the child's arm stiffened: they carried her immediately into the Kella, where Haj Nejm hanged some charms about her, and by the mercy of God the child recovered."

The shrubs, too, retain their sacredness from past tradition when it was told how the Meluck or "powers

of the air" came down to visit the menhel. "Thither the tribesmen coming in their rahlas, the sick person will sacrifice a sheep, for his health, or a goat, with blood-sprinkling. He cooks the flesh in the place; and divides it to his friends, and leaves some hanging upon the branches: then he lies down to slumber full of his supersitious faith that the Melaika will descend upon him in vision, and speak precepts for his health. 'The sick will awaken whole and sound; but if any one in health be so hardy as to slumber there, he will rise upon the morrow a broken man', There are two menahil in the Jau, one of them is a bush or thirwa; the possessed trees are behanged with old beads, votive shreds of calico, lappets of coloured stuffs, and other vile baggage. Another is that great desert thron before the Kella at el Hejr"[1]. Can we not say that their superstition of the menhel-trees is a remnant of the tree-worship of ancient Arabia?

The life sustaining oases harbored animals of the desert, the serpent in particular which was always to be found in abundance. As a part of the supernatural

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[1]Doughty, Arabia Deserta, Vol. I, p. 449; Gen. 32.3.

element of the oasis he too, being sacred, added to the superstitions of the people[1].

As is observed from this brief resume of Semitic Religious beginnings, the oasis was of prime but not sole importance. The spirits and demons of animals and vegetation held their spell over primitive minds but one must not forget that the sky too held its mysteries. Apparently the chief of these mysteries was the moon[2], for "Owners of flocks and herds, who wandered over the measureless tracts of steppeland, moved mostly by night, because of the heat during the day; to them therefore the moon was of paramount importance - - -. Further, as a god, whenever the moon first appeared in the skies

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[1]Geo. A. Barton, Semitic Origins, p. 93;
Peters, Religion of the Hebrews, p. 77;
Gen. 3; Nu. 21.9; II K. 18.4;
Addis, Hebrew Religion, p. 31 claims that the creation story of man and woman in Gen. 3 reflects, in its original form primitive Semitic ideas introducing civilization with the knowledge of sex, attaching a sacred character to such relationships.

[2]Worship of the Moon continued to Christian times, Col. 2.16. The Sabbath probably had its origin in the Moon worship, for reasons see Oesterley and Robinson, Rel. of the Hebrews, p. 95.
See also Neh. 13.17-21; 10.33; II K. 4.23; Am. 8.5; Hos. 2.11; Is. 1.13; I Chr. 23.31; II Chr. 2.4; 8.13; 31.3; Ezr. 3.5.

(i.e. at every 'new moon') its appearance was hailed with joyful shouts; it is significant that the Arabic word hilal means both 'new-moon' and 'festal shout'. There are numerous indications pointing to the fact that from the earliest times the appearance of the new moon was celebrated as a great festival in Arabia, the reason obviously to do honor to the god on his reappearance"[1].

As a part of this primitive cult in which the idea of fertility held sway, circumcision was widely practiced as a tribal mark[2], as a means by which the God would recognize his followers or as making one receptive to the blessing of fertility. Circumcision was generally accompanied by ceremonial feasts. This practice of circumcision is later evident in the varied branches of Semites[3].

The origin of such fertility gradually acquired a semblance of sacredness, thus the spirits of the

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[1] Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 93.

[2] Addis, Hebrew Religion, p. 41-42;
Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 328.
Both Addis and Smith claim the exercise of circumcision came at puberty accompanied by a special ceremony.

[3] For the practice of circumcision among the Hebrews see - Ex. 4.24-25; 12.48; Gen. 17.10-12; Lev. 12.3; Josh.5.5-9.

threshold, the door posts and the sockets.[1]

The oasis of the desert became to the Semite a veritable "garden of his God, its water and trees visible representatives of his deities. The society in which he lived was one of the great sexual freedom in which the mother was the head of the family: he therefore naturally thought of his god as a mother - - - . The trees in the oasis were palm trees; the sex relations of the trees and of human beings were all combined in his mind - - - so that the 'self waterer' was for him the 'fruit producer', 'the creator of life', 'the mother goddess', the goddess of love. Such (with its accompanying acceptance of spirits and demons) was the religion of the Semites in their primitive home while they were yet one people.[2]

These are in general the basic elements in the primitive Semitic Religion. As occasions arise further references will be made to primitive religion in particular.

Such was the Nomad when he first made the desert his home. But he was not always, as a race, destined

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[1]Ex. 21.6.

[2]Barton, Semitic Origins, p. 106.

to remain in isolation. Forces from within were, at various intervals, pushing him toward the more civilized portions of the Mediteranean area where eventually he would be absorbed in the new culture, but not without first having contributed his ideas and his blood.

Such forces from within were insufficient food and water for themselves and for the sheep, camels and asses; the devastating effects of shifting sand dunes and the barbaric craving of the nomad for plunder.

These group impacts into the comparatively settled agricultural lands had their beginnings in early history.[1] The first traceable move began ca 4000 B.C., into the lands of Mesopotamia and North Syria. Again in 2500 B.C.[2] the so-called Canaanites drifted into Palestine. A thousand years later the Aramean wave brought into Palestine the Hebrews, and their related tribes. Following this wave came numerous others continuing even into the centuries A.D., always contributing their new

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[1]Cook, Art. "Semites", Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Chapt. V, p. 190.

[2]King, History of Babylon, p. 125.

blood and new ideas from the Arabian waste lands.

The description of one group of the Hebrews coming into Palestine given by Prof. Albright[1] is typical of most of the migratory waves.

"It was from the desert east of Moab that the Hebrews made their descent into the land of promise. It was there that there had gathered together one of those great hordes that are accustomed to unite for such an enterprise. It is characteristic of the tribal form of organization that it is capable of great elasticity. A number of tribes combine together under a common leader for a common purpose. It is not probable that all the Israelites were of the same kindred. We know the Kenites and Kenizzites, Midianites and Edomites, were associated with them. What is essential to recognize, as it alone explains their history, is that they were one people with a quite definite unity. Their history represents them as starting with a unity which was fundamental and conscious, with definite characteristics which separated them from other races.

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[1] Albright, Art. "The Third Campaign of Tell Beit Mirsim", Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research, No. 39, Oct. 1930. This is typical of one group, but I do not agree with Albright that this wave included the entire Hebrew nation.

This unity was fundamentally religious. They were all alike worshipers of Yahweh - - -. This unity was based upon three great traditions: the first is the salvation of the Israelites from the Egyptians. 'Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea'. So sings a probably ancient song. The second is the memory of the great event of Mount Sinai, or Horeb, - - -. Again, an early song tells us: 'the Lord came from Sinai; and rose from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came from the ten thousands of holy ones'. And then, thirdly, there is the memory of Moses as the Law-giver (only in the broader sense as Moses is the leader of his tribe), and the leader of the people."

Thus united under a leader, this great horde[1], overran the land of Palestine settling in the South, Judah; in the central district, and the northern in the plain of Esdraelon. But they were unable to drive out all the inhabitants, thus leaving cities which were purely of Canaanites, and others which were an

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[1]Again referring to only one group of Hebrews.

amalgamation of Canaanites and Hebrews. It was this Canaanitish remnant which was to have a direct influence on the future religion of the Hebrews.

Chapter III

THE CANAANITE BACKGROUND

It was inevitable that Canaanite culture would leave its indelible marks on the life and thinking of the Hebrews. For a group of people who had themselves become so markedly a part of the desert, must needs imitate some one in adapting their mode of living to an entirely new situation and yet one might paradoxically say not so entirely new, for while changing to the occupation of agriculture many still lived spasmodically or exclusively[1] in tents while practically all turned at seasonal periods to the nomadic pastoral life.

And still further one must say that such a new existence made necessary a new religion, for in such primitive society, it is not too much to say that the gods were a part of the land in which one lived. Thus Semitic loyalty to the gods of the desert oasis was transferred, becoming focused on the gods of the

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[1] The Rachabites strictly adhered to their nomadic heritage, Jer. 35.6,7.

agricultural land of Palestine. "It was from the Canaanites that they had to learn how to till the soil and secure bountiful harvests. The cultivation of the olive and the vine, in particular demands advanced knowledge and a settled civilization. Lore of this kind implied to the ancients much more than it would to us. Fertility was regarded as the gift of the local Baalim, or divine powers which haunted each fruitful districts, and they had from time immemorial been worshipped with rites designed to win from them their blessing on the crops. It was natural, then, that when they learnt the art of agriculture the Hebrews should learn and practice the religious rites on which its success depended."[1]

But consideration of such changes will be given recognition later. It is sufficient to note here that some change was bound to come. Turning now to the Canaanites themselves, it is well to pause for a moment to ascertain if possible who they were. There are numerous theories but the most probable theory is the

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[1]Peake, The Religion of Israel, p. 30.

one of Semitic origin.[1]

The real beginning of civilization in Canaan dates back to Neolithic times after a break of an unknown length of time in the early Palestinian culture.[2] From the Neolithic or later Stone Age onward there "is no break in the continuity of culture, and each age was the direct heir of that which preceeded it. Over these primitive inhabitants a fresh tide of migration swept, probably in the early part of the third millennium B.C. The newcomers were Semites from Arabia, of the same stock of those Nonadic hordes who had already overrun Babylonia - - -. After they had settled in Canaan and Syria they were known to the Babylonians as the 'Ammurra' or Amorites".[3]

By intermarrying with their predecessors they produced the Canaanites of history[4], a people of Semitic speech, but with a varying admixture in their blood of

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[1]Ency. Britanica, IIth Edition, Art., "Canaanites"; Paton, The Early Religion of Israel, p. 55; Marti, Religion of the Old Testament, p. 36.

[2]King, A History of Babylon, p. 124.

[3]Ibid, p. 125.

[4]Another Canaanite Migration occured in 1800 B.C. according to Wood in his Art., "Rel. in Canaan", J.B.L., Vol. 35.

the dark skinned Mediterranean race of lower type.[1]

It was then among this group of people, ultimately coming from Arabia but immediately from Babylon, keeping continualy under Babylonian influence from 3000 to 1700 B.C.,[2] amalgamating with the inhabitants of Palestine, and later feeling the direct influence of Egyptian rule, and the results produced from contacts with other nations - it was among such a people as this that the Hebrews were eventually to find themselves.

With this background in mind, it is advisable to turn back to that phase which has the priority in our thinking here - that of religion. The task before us is not simple; and although the attempt is made to bring out of the complexities of Canaanite religion and its influence on the Hebrews, as something which is tangible and unified, one is conscious of the intensity of the problem of distinguishing from that which is purely of Canaan, that which is a mixture of Canaanite and foreign and that which savors predominantly of the Semites.

Another problem upon which conclusions are equally

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[1]King, A History of Babylon, p. 125.

[2]Paton, The Early Religion of Israel.

difficult to reach is that of drawing a fixed line at the close of certain stages of development, such as the period of Canaanite introductions, and subsequently dealing exclusively with the prophetic period. No decided break is present from the beginning of Hebrew history in Palestine, through to the period of the exile. Rather internal and external influences are continual, and one catches glimpses of a gradual progress towards a synthetic religion, at first much retarded by the inferior Nomadic state of mind and the pastoral stage of civilization, but gradually amalgamating to such as extent that by the ninth century B.C. Hebrew prophets rise up in horror at future possibilities.

But let us once again turn to that phase - religious practices - which is of predominant interest in this thesis. What was the religion of Canaan, which, as closely as one can understand, so moulded Hebrew religion?

There was one practice, involving many, which seemed to dominate the life of the people - the worship at the High Places. Religious practices of the group were

centered in the High Places[1], the remains of a number of which have been unearthed today in Palestine thus enabling one to visualize by the aid of the imagination an ancient worship. One such High Place was the Temple of Thothmes III (1501-1447 B.C.)[2] at Beth-Shan. It was, from all appearances, an old center of Serpent Worship.[3] This structure was a combination of a temple with its altars and a high place "the latter being generally a crudely-walled sanctuary open to the sky, containing sacred stone columns (Mazzeboth) representing the god, and sacred coventional trees (Asherim)

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[1]High places were a direct contribution from Canaan and were still dominant in later Israel: i.e. I Sam. 65.7; I Kg. 12.31ff; II Kg. 17.9,29; 23,15.

[2]Alan Rowe and P.L. Vincent, Art., "New Light on the Evolution of the Canaanite Temples", Palestine Exploration Fund, Jan. 1931. This Temple shows definite Egyptian influence. "A stela bearing the name and figure of Mekal, who is called 'the Lord of Beth-Shan', thus giving us for the first time a transition between the representation of a god in the form of a column to the representation of the same god in human form."

[3]Serpent Worship mentioned in the O.T., II Kg. 18.4; Nu. 21.9. In the Canaanite strata of Tell Beit Mirsim, ca 1800-1100 B.C., there was unearthed in a house a broken and partly reclining stela representing the Serpent goddess in relief - Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible.

representing the goddess, and also some other cultural equipment."

The parts of the structure which have been left standing give sufficient evidence to indicate that sacrifices were an essential part of the religious rites. In the great court yard there are three tables for cutting up carcases; the inner sanctuary possessed two, one for meat, the actual skeletal remains of a young bull being discovered on the altar; the other from its shape must have been for liquid offerings. In another section, named the sacrificial altar room, there stands an altar with a channel and a receptacle for blood,[1] near which were lying the two horns of a bull that had been sacrificed upon it, and also a sacrificial dagger; in still another room there was the fire place, the ashes still present, upon which the sacrifice could be cooked.

Within this temple numerous cult objects were found- the chief one being, as was the case in other places, the Ashtart. "Ashtart makes a frequent appearance sometimes pregnant, sometimes holding her breasts, sometimes with

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[1]Ex. 34.13; Dt. 7.5; 12.3; Jud. 2.2.

child in arms, now with wig and again with scalloped headdress and double bracelets; the material may be simple clay, ivory, or opaque green glass covered with white glaze - - - here Ashtart is indeed nude, but she wears the Egyptian headdress and carries the 'waz' scepter. A flat dish decorated with a procession of dark red gazelles remind us that this animal was sacred to Ashtart."[1]

Other cult objects revealed North Syrian influence, the cylinder seals depicting the sacred stag, sacred trees and sacred birds. While not of religious significance it is interesting to note that the temple also showed traces of Cypriote and Cretan influence as brought out in the pottery, which helps to bring one to the realization that Canaanite civilization was the result of many cultures.[2]

The symbol of this Temple worship, the Serpent[3], was represented by the Stele of the Egyptian Mekal[4]; "Mekal,

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[1]Olmstead, History of Palestine and Syria, p. 153.

[2]Ibid, p. 153.

[3]"Shakhan" - Mesopotamian word for Serpent.
"Beth-Shan" - "House of the Serpent god".

[4]Alan Rowe and Vincent, Art. "New Light on the Evolution of the Canaanite Temples", Palestine Exploration Fund, Jan. 1931.

meaning 'great lord, lord of Beth Shan', a local form of Reshuph, the fire God",[1] This symbol was also used to decorate the sacred weights of basalt.[2]

The Temple of Thothmes III was not alone in this area of Beth-Shan. Among others betraying Egyptian influence was the Temple of Rameses II (1292-1225 B.C.). In the inner sanctuary there was uncovered the stela portraying the goddess Ashtoreth in the form of Antil, the warrior goddess, called the Queen of Heaven, and mistress of all the gods.[3] This northern temple of Rameses II has been identified as the "house of Ashtaroth"[4]. A complimentary Southern Temple has been

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[1]Olmstead, History of Palestine and Syria, p. 151.

[2]Ibid, figures 74-76 pp. p. 154.

[3]Jer. 44.19-20 (Moffatt) suggests the worship of this goddess: "Yes", cried the women, "and had we not the consent of our husbands when we sacrificed to the Queen of Heaven and poured libations in her honor and made cakes in the shape of her?" Then Jeremiah said to the people, to the men and women who had given this answer; "You offered these sacrifices in the towns of Judah, and on the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and leaders and the commons?"

[4]I Chr. 10.10.

inaccurately identified as the Temple of Dagon[1].

Palestine during the early period and later, was relatively covered with such high places where representative deities were worshipped.[2]

In the old Biblical town of Shechem, on the late Canaanite level, a temple has been recovered, which is thought to be the temple of Baal-berith mentioned in Judges 8-9 as being destroyed ca 1100 B.C. In this temple both Canaanite and Israelite objects were found.[3] The much discussed Hebrew High Place of Gezer[4] had its beginning before the so-called Canaanite period, being taken over by the people of Canaan and later by the Hebrews.

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[1]G. P. Hedley in his Art., "The 'Temple of Dagon' at Beth-Shan", Am. Jr. of Arch., Jan. 1929, points out the inadequacy of literary evidence, referring to I Sam. 31.8-10 and I Chr. 10.8-10, and the lack of Archaeological evidence substantiating this literary evidence, supporting the position of a "House of Dagon" at Beth-Shan.

[2]Paton, The Early Religion of Israel, p. 56-58 gives a list of the names of high places. See the description of Tell-es-Safi in Excavations in Palestine, 1898-1900 by Bliss and Macalister and Wunsch.

[3]Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible, p. 56.

[4]Macalister, Excavations of Gezer, Vol. II, Chapter on "Religion, Folklore and Superstition."

With such emphasis laid on the worship at the high places, is it any wonder that the Semites coming into Palestine would consider such worship essential in pleasing the deity of this new land? Consequently many an ancient Canaanite shrine was taken over by the Hebrews, who either accepted the representative god of the particular shrine, or in performing the rites of the sanctuary substituted the name of their God Yahweh for that of the deity of the natives.[1] "At Shechem there was a high place to a god called Baal-berith (Judges 9.4) or El-berith (Judges 9.46). This became not only a shrine of Yahweh, but tradition in time attributed its origin to Abraham, the Hebrew (Gen 12.6ff). Abraham had had a vision there by a sacred oak, it was said, and in this vision God had promised Canaan to his descendants. Bethel, another old Canaanite sanctuary, had been regarded as a divine abode because of the peculiar character of the stones there - - - . The Israelites, taking over the sanctuary, explained the beginnings of its sanctity by the story of a dream that

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[1]Hos. 2.16.

Jacob, their ancestor, once had there."[1]

The important role which these high places once played in the religious life of Palestinians has been brought out. But such rites as were performed have as yet only been suggested. A general survey of the outstanding characteristics of these high places[2] will here be most helpful.

These so-called high places of Canaan were not always located on the hills above the town[3] but one might see them near cities[4], in cities[5], at the entrance of the gates[6], at the head of every way[7] or even in the valley[8]. They all included in their equipment certain objects of and for worship; the Massebah, the symbol

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[1]Geo. A. Barton, The Religion of Israel, p. 76.

[2]G. L. Robinson, Art. "High Places", Ency. Religion and Ethics.

[3]I Sam. 9.12-14.

[4]I Sam. 9.25; 10.5.

[5]I Kg. 13.32; II Kg. 17.9.

[6]II Kg. 23.8.

[7]Ez. 16.25,31.

[8]Jer. 7.31; 19.5,6; 32.35; Ez. 6.3.

representing the deity[1], the Asherah or sacred pole, an artificial pole of wood or stump of a tree[2], planted in the earth[3], artificially constructed of wood[4] in image like form[5], and which could be "plucked up"[6], "cut down"[7], "broken to pieces"[8] and "burnt"[9]; the stones, rough unhewn or chiselled[10], the numerous rooms, chambers, or sacred halls[11] where many a sacrificial meal was eaten[12] and the innermost rooms in which religious prostitution

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[1]Ex. 23.24; Dt. 7.5; 12.3 - regarded by the patriarchs as the true worship of Yahweh, but later denounced as illegitimate: Dt. 16.22; Mic. 5.13.

[2]The Ashera is probably akin to tree worship, the tree being the abode of the deity, Dt. 11.30; and the symbol of fertility.

[3]Dt. 16.21.

[4]I Kg. 15.13.

[5]Ex. 34.13.

[6]Dt. 12.3.

[7]Jud. 6.26; I Kg. 14.15; Isa. 17.8.

[8]Mic. 5.14.

[9]II Chr. 34.4.

[10]Hos. 10.1,2; I Kg. 3.4; II Kg. 23.15; Isa. 36.7.

[11]I Kg. 12.31; 13.32; II Kg. 23.19.

[12]I Sam. 9.22.

was carried on[1]; and finally the attendants, the priests[2], the male Prostitutes[3] and the sacred Harlots[4].

From the survey of the high places it is but a step to the priests with their accompanying obligations: for with a definite place and material objects of adoration regular attendants were required.

In the more ancient times the Priests' chief duty was not that of offering the sacrifice, but rather acting the part of the seer or the soothsayer. His was the responsibility of deciding doubtful cases. In Judges 18.5 and 6 we read "And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace; before Yahweh is your way wherein ye go". And again in I Samuel 32.2 we read "Therefore David inquired of Yahweh, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And Yahweh said unto David,

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[1]Am. 2.8; Ez. 16.24,31.

[2]Kohanim, I Kg. 12.32; 13.2,33 - Idolatrous priests were called Kemarin, II Kg. 23.5.

[3]Qedheshim - Dt. 23.17; II Kg. 23.7.

[4]Kedheshoth - II Kg. 23.7; I Kg. 14.24; Dt. 23.17,18; Hos. 4.14.

Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah".

The priest is referred to[1] as one who "carried an Ephod". The Ephod in this particular connection denotes a portable image[2] which was often set up in the sanctuary with the "Teraphim"[3], affording a means of questioning Yahweh[4]. Along with the Ephod and the Teraphim[5] as a means of Divination were the Urim and Thummim[6]. Paton remarks that the priests "guarded the shrines and cultivated the means of divination"[7]. A cuneiform letter from Taanach substantiates the use of divination, reading, "If the finger of the goddess

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[1]I Sam. 14.3; Jud. 17.18.

[2]The Ephod at Ophia (Jud. 8.26-27) made of wood, silver or gold was overlaid with 1700 sheckels.

[3]A Teraphim stood in the House of Michal, fashioned in human form and being about the size of a man.

[4]Art. "Ephod", Ency. Rel. and Ethics.

[5]King Josiah in his reforms, II Kgs. 23, ordered all those who had familiar spirits, and the wizards and teraphim and idols and all the abominations in the land of Judah to be put away - Peters, Religion of the Hebrews, pp. 260-261.

[6]Thought of as (1) the stones on the High Priest's Breast plate, (2) Sacred Dice or (3) Little images worn around the neck - Art. "Urim and Thummim", Ency. Rel. and Ethics.

[7]Art. "Canaanites", Ency. Rel. and Ethics.

Ashtart shall indicate, let me observe and obey".[1]

The guarding of the shrines was of primary importance, for within the shrines dwelt the image of the god and the consulting priests. It must be noted that any spoils of war, either of images or of priests, were preserved in the temple.[2] This duty of consulting the oracles required special knowledge and therefore professional priests. Thus those who consulted the oracles were probably of priestly descent, eventually developing the priestly hierachy.[3]

Before bringing to a close this discussion on the priests of Canaan two other means of divination which have been brought out by Paul Haupt[4] are worth noting.

The first one of these can be seen in the moves of

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[1] Art., "Canaanites", Ency. Rel. Ethics.

[2] Jud. 18 - the Danites coveted and carried off the images and the consulting priests to their new home.

[3] M. Butenwieser, Art., "Priests", Jewish Ency., On the other hand there are instances of priests residing at special sanctuaries acting as sacrificers and receiving a part of the animal sacrifice as their fees (I Sam. 2); see also Peters, Religion of the Hebrews, p. 119.

[4] Art. "Crystal Gazing in the O.T.", J.B.L. Vol. 36-37. 1917-1918.

Elisha[1] who on his death bed commanded Jehu's grandson, King Joash of Israel (798-783) to shoot an arrow through an open window westward. This incident may be compared with the Babylonian who used the arrow to determine future plans. It is said that by the means of the arrow Nebuchadrezzar determined the fate of Jerusalem.

The second of these methods of foretelling is the Oracle tree[3] which tree answers the inquirer by the rustling of the branches. "Whenever you hear a sound of movement among the tops of the balsam tree (baca-tree), be quick and attack, for the Eternal will have gone in front of you to rout the Philistine army."

Mention has previously been made of the chief place occupied by the Astarte in Canaanite devotion[2]. But other gods and goddesses held their own place[4]. Of the various deities with which one could deal, which in some way effected the religion of the Hebrews, only a few

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[1]II Kg. 13.14-19.

[2]The Ashtarte shall be dealt with more in particular under the discussion of the "Prophetic Period".

[3]Gen. 12.6, Dt. 11.30, Jud. 9.37; II Sam. 5.22ff.

[4]See list in Art. "Canaanites", Ency. Rel. and Ethics.

shall be brought to mind here.

Chemosh, the god of Moab, Barton[1] declares to have been a part of the religious life of Israel for 400 years, dating from the introduction of the worship by Solomon[2] to its destruction by Josiah. Moabite devotion was accompanied by drunkeness[3] and human sacrifice[4].

The rites of the Philistine grain-God[5] Dagon are little known, the total knowledge being the sacredness of the threshold of the sanctuary[6]. Nevertheless he was recognized[7] and probably played some part in Hebrew beliefs.

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[1]Geo. A. Barton, Art. "Chemosh", Jewish Ency.

[2]Budde, The Religion of Israel to the Exile, p. 114. I Kg. 11.7.

[3]Gen. 19.32; Jer. 48.26.

[4]II Kg. 3.27; II Chr. 21.10,16.

[5]Olmstead, A History of Palestine and Syria, p. 269.

[6]I Sam. 5.5; Zeph. 1.9.

[7]I Sam. 5.1-5, Jud. 16.23,25; I Sam. 6.5.

The worship of the Host of Heaven[1] expressly the sun, moon and stars was characteristic of the polytheistic ideas of Semitic Nomads and thus could well be a carry over from the Nomadic period. It was also a religious observance of Canaan[2].

The most representative worship of Canaan, which was absorbed by the Hebrews was that of Baalim. The invading nomads, carrying with them the Semitic idea of a god localized in a definite place, naturally, upon entering the new land accepted the gods of this different sphere. Religious amalgamation was simplified by the nature of the gods of Palestine which were patrons of agriculture, bearing no specific name save that of Baal symbolizing only ownership, master, or lord of the land[3]. Later complexities arose due to the number of Baals, each of them being located in his specific place of worship. As lords of the land the Baals held control over the produce of the field,

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[1]For Hosts of Heaven as recipients of Idolatrous veneration see Dt. 4.19; 17.3; II Kg. 17.16; 21.3-5; Jer. 8.2; 19.13; Zeph. 1.5.

[2]The name of Jericho, A Canaanite town, means "moon-worship".

[3]Bade, The Old Testament in the Light of Today.

controlling the rain and the germinating of the seed. It was in the power of such a deity to bring upon an erring community absolute disaster. It seemed essential, then, that the Hebrews should know how to please such a god, and it is not strange to note that the Canaanites were those who were capable of teaching the Hebrews the proper rites. It is some time later, in the time of Hosea, that we hear the wailings of a prophet protesting against this foreign domination "I will go after my lovers (Baals)" cry the Israelites, "that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink".[1] And again we read in the protests of Deuteronomy[2] "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples that are round about you; for Yahweh thy God in the midst of thee is a jealous God; lest the anger of Yahewh thy God be kindled against thee, and he destroy thee from off the face of the earth."

Amos cries out in protest against the Canaanite high places which have become the sanctuaries of Yahweh,

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[1] W.F. Bade, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 189.

[2] Dt. 6.14,15.

and the rites of Baalim used in the ceremonies of Yahweh[1]. "Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the Lord Yahweh, the god of hosts. For in the day that I will visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el; and the horns of the altars shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter-house and the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the many houses shall have an end saith Yahewh." "Did ye bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?"[2] Some were rites that were not necessarily evil in themselves, but rather recognized as such because they bore upon them the stamp of heathen influence. On the other hand there were rites considered immoral or rather unmoral when compared with the moral standards of today. Especially were these seen in agricultural festivals, celebrating the death and resurrection of the goddess of fertility when orgies of body mutilation, sex relationship and merry making were carried to

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[1]Am. 3.13.

[2]Am. 6.24.

extremities[1]. Female and male prostitutes inhabited the temples and shrines[2].

"Along with the Baal was worshipped a Baalat, a corresponding Goddess - - - there was a duality of sex and a tendency to worship the goddess with immoral rites. At her shrines and in her name sexaul license was permitted or commanded and sometimes the sacrifice of female chastity was required in her service. At places strange and unatural lust formed part of her worship."[3]

Agricultural feasts were of prior importance in the life of a people who were so dependent on the produce of the land[4]. They were attended by rich and poor, accompanied by great jubilation[5], expressed in

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[1] Dt. 14.1; Isa. 57.5-8; Ez. 16.17; Hosea.

[2] H. G. May, Art. "The Fertility Cult in Hosea", Am. Jr. of Semitic Lang. and Lit., Vol. XLVIII, Jan. 1932, attempts to prove that the real object of the protests of Hosea was the Fertility cult of Canaan which had been taken over by the Hebrews.

[3] Peters, Hebrew Religion, p. 113, and p. 113 n.

[4] Agricultural festivals were a direct contribution of Canaanite civilization to Hebrew religion.

[5] Ex. 32.6; I Kg. 8.1.

eating and drinking before the deity[1], joining in processions[2], dancing[3], arraying oneself in gorgeous garments and jewels[4] and indulging in the unchaste rites that were so prevalent[5]. In the fertility cult[6] there was celebrated the death of the god in the autumm, mourning rites, the resurrection in the spring and marriage of the god and goddess, accompanied by rites of sacred prostitution[7] and human sacrifice[8]. The ritualistic weeping[9] at the burial of the god of vegetation found in this fertility cult of the Canaanites was adopted by the Hebrews and justified by the prophets as a fitting means of worshiping

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[1] I Sam. 1.4-15; 2.12-17.

[2] II Sam. 6.1; I Kg. 8.1.

[3] Ex. 32.6,19; Jud. 21.21, 23.

[4] Hos. 2.15.

[5] I Sam. 2.22-24.

[6] The idea of fertility in this cult savors of nomadic influence.

[7] Dt. 23.18; I Kg. 14.24; Jer. 3.6; Isa. 57.3.

[8] Ez. 16.20-22; 23.37.

[9] I Kg. 18.28; Hos.7.14-16; Joel 1.9-10; accompanied by lacerations - I Kg. 18.28; Jer. 16.6.

Yahweh but condemned when directed towards other deities[1].

"Those who are sowing in tears shall reap with shouts of joy; sadly they bear seed to the field, gladly they bear home the sheaves!"[2] The weeping of the Babylonian King at the New Year festival was a good omen for the ensuing year.

One can see in the feasts and festivals the apparent grossness of sexual immorality. But let us consider the age in which these people lived and say with H.G. May[3], although not entirely attempting to excuse the licentiousness that "It had many aspects, such as prostitution and human sacrifice, which are repugnant to the modern mind, but which, when seen in the proper perspective, evidence a serious devotion to the ideal which shames our modern sophisticated religious attitudes".

Included in the rites accompanying the festivals was the practice of offering the first fruits of the

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[1]Dt. 14.1, 2; Lev. 19.27.

[2]Ps. 126.6.

[3]Art., "The Fertility Cult in Hosea", Am. Jr. Semitic Lang. and Lit., Vol. XLVIII, Jan. 1932, p. 98.

field strictly Canaanite introduction[1]. The offering of the first fruits was not limited to agricultural products but extended into the human realm[2]. Archaeology has uncovered evidence of human sacrifice, both infant and adult[3], At Taanach the skeletons of newborn infants have been found buried in jars in the temples, also as foundation sacrifices in the homes. At Gezer two burnt skeletons of children about six years of age were found in the ancient sanctuary. Near these skeletons was found a cistern adapted as a receptacle for the refuse of such sacrifices. In this receptacle were found the bones of animals, of men and of women. Again it is believed that the skeleton of a fifteen year old girl, discovered in the wall of a house at Tell Mutesellim, is that of a foundation sacrifice performed at the erection of a large building.

Traces are not absent in either early[4] or later

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[1]Bade, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 190.

[2]Ex. 22.29, 30.

[3]Dt. 12.31; Ex. 34.19; II Kg. 16.3; Jer. 7.31; Lev. 18.21.

[4]Jud. 11.

Hebrew history[1], in the early case to Yahweh and in the later one to Molech. It is most probable[2] that children were sacrificed to Yahweh as Melek even in the temple at Jerusalem[3]. "There can be no doubt that in the Hebrew period Yahweh came to be identified with ham-Melek, and was worshipped under the title 'the king' with the rites that originally belonged to the cult of the Canaanite ham-Melek. It is significant that Yahweh is often called King."[4]

In the field of human sacrifice as well as in practically every phase of Canaanite popular religion which has been discussed, the popular religion of the Hebrews is involved. One is so interwoven in the other, that insurmountable difficulties arise in dealing with each period as a separate entity.

Let us leave then the trend of thought which has been centered on religion in pre-Israelite Canaan, and

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[1]II Kg. 23.10ff.

[2]Lev. 18.21; 20.2-5.

[3]Bade, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 197 n.

[4]Wood, Art., "The Religion of Canaan", J.B.L., Vol. 35.

turn to the period which is more strictly that of the Hebrews, remembering always that the Canaanite beginnings of Hebrew culture in Palestine must be taken into account.

Chapter IV

THE PROPHETIC PERIOD

The Prophetic Period of Hebrew popular religion is only a slight movement in the continuous current of Israelite civilization progressing from the most primitive nomadic society, unable for a time even to grasp the more advanced ways of Palestinian life, to the Israel of a fairly well organized nation, (although soon divided into two kingdoms), ruled over by kings. Current conception of the extent of the Prophetic period limits the time to the years intervening between the eighth century and the fourth century B.C. Although scholars agree to these dates as being inclusive of the canonical prophets prophetic practice was current at a much earlier date. Some trace the earlier development of the prophetic function to primitive Semitic nomads[1], others to

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[1] E. Konig, Art., "Prophecy (Hebrew)", Ency. Religion and Ethics.

earlier times in Hebrew history in Palestine[1], while there is yet the possibility of its being of Canaanite origin. W.T. Davidson[2] says that the knowledge of the beginning of Hebrew prophecy is lost in comparative obscurity, and further that the function of the prophet may have been blended with that of the priest - making of the two one office.[3]

The prophetic period recognized in this chapter shall, as far as possible, be confined to the time elapsing between the dates representing the beginning of the Canonical prophets, 750 B.C. and the Exile of the kingdom of Israel 597 B.C. Nevertheless, to treat the subject exclusive of previous chapters is impossible. Thus it will often be advisable to pick up the threads of the past bringing them into the present discussion. In fact it could even be claimed

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[1]Konig, Art., "Prophecy (Hebrew)", Ency. Religion and Ethics.
Gen. 20.7(E): Abraham is referred to as a prophet. See also Jud. 4.4; Ex.15.20.

[2]W.T. Davidson, Art., "Prophecy, Prophets", HDB.

[3]Bade Believes Nu. 11.25 to describe the earliest known order of Hebrew prophets - Bade, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 170ff.

that the popular religion of the Prophetic period was the blooming of the bud of past influences both of Semitic and of Canaanite, the two combining to produce the religion of the Hebrews.

Let us now observe such practices as actually existed. As the High Place was the central means of worship among the people of Canaan, so did it hold an important place among the Hebrews. That such a place was not, however, sanctioned by all is seen in the commands of the writer of Deuteronomy (ca. 650 B.C.) who tries, in opposition to heathen influences, to center the worship of the Hebrews at Jerusalem. "Take heed", warns the people, "to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest".[1] Even more vigorously does he warn them against serving Yahweh at these heathen sanctuaries, even implying the worship of heathen gods at the same high place. "You shall destroy all the spots at which the nations whom you despossess worshipped their gods, on high mountains,

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[1] Dt. 12.2-3 (Moffatt); See also 16.21. Jeremiah (19.19) does not appear to be conscious of this heathen influence. Am. 3.14,15; 5.2-24 recognizes the evil of heathen high places, also Hos. 2.5.

on hills, and under any leafy tree: you must demolish their altars, break their obelisks, burn up their sacred poles, and cut down the carved images of their gods, wiping their very name from the spot. Not thus shall you worship the Eternal your God."[1]

That such high places existed during this period are verified by the discoveries of archaeology. For example in the ancient shrine which has already been mentioned - that of Gezer[2]. As this sanctuary is typical of the high places of this period, a description of it in detail will acquaint one with the various accompanying means of group and individual devotion.

Making up the shrine are two caves, one the original and the other a later addition, the two being connected only by one small, narrow, winding passage, through which one is forced to crawl if he desires to

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[1] Dt. 12.13 (Moffatt). Continuing into chapter 12, the agricultural religious rites of the people of Palestine which have been absorbed by the Hebrews are apparently proper if used as a means of worship to Yahweh and carried out at the proper sanctuary - vs. 5ff.

[2] R. A. S. Macalister, The Excavation of Gezer; P. S. P. Handock, The Archaeology of the Holy Land; Geo. A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 186.

gain admittance to the rear cave, as this passage way is the only means of entrance into the second chamber, the outside entrance having been blocked from the inside with moveable stone blocks.

The relative inaccessibility of Cave No. 2 suggests its possible use as a "Holy of Holies"[1] suitable for oracles. An official impersonation of the voice of the deity, sounded through this mysterious passage, could well produce the desired effect upon an individual who had previously undergone rites and ordeals.[2] This suggestion is not so difficult to accept after one realizes the numerous methods of Divination prevelant in Israel[3]. Some of these were necromancy and familiar spirits[4], casting of lots[5], rhabdomancy[6], augury[7] use

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[1]Handcock, Archaeology of the Holy Land, p. 347

[2]Macalister, Excavations at Gezer, p. 384-385.

[3]Isa. 2.6; II Kg. 21.6;
F. E. Robinson, Art. "Magic, Divination and Sorcery", HDB.

[4]Isa. 15.23; 28.8; II Kg. 17.17.

[5]Jud. 1.1; II Sam. 2.1; Isa. 14.41.

[6]Hos. 4.12.

[7]Dt. 18.10.

of animals[1] and ordeals[2].

West of these two caves, and running north and south, was an alignment of ten monoliths, masseboth or pillars, the height of the tallest being ten feet and nine inches, and that of the shortest five feet and five inches[3]. Among this group was one outstanding stone different in composition from the others, evidently having its source at a distance from Gezer. Rope marks suggest the probability of its being dragged from another sacred sanctuary. This is well in keeping with the idea that one Massebah was generally set up as representative of the deity worshiped at a particular place while smaller ones were set up for the purpose of doing it honor.

The custom of erecting a massebah or sacred pillar is, according to Bade [4] a carry-over from the Arabs who believed the numen to reside in the stone. We find

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[1] Nu. 22.27.

[2] Nu. 5.12.

[3] Geo. A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 186.

[4] Wm. F. Bade, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, p. 29.

masseboth mentioned in the more ancient parts of the Old Testament serving as momuments[1] at graves and historical places. By the time of Hosea[2] the massebah is an indispensable feature of the sanctuaries of northern Israel, and thus has taken on a ritual significance. The special ritual acts which connect the massebah with Canaanite worship resulted finally in its becoming decidedly an object of prophetic protest[3]; for in the high places the massebah is found at the side of the altar, acting as a symbol or the embodiment of the presence of the deity[4]. That by the time of the early prophets the massebah has not taken on the significance of an image is seen in Hosea's denunciation of the calf worship and the worship of graven images[5], while he considers the massebah, the ephod and the

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[1]B. D. Eredmans, Art., "The Sepulchral Monument 'Massebah'", J.B.L., Vol. XXX, 1911.
Gen. 35.20; II Sam. 18.18; Josh. 24.26; Gen. 31.45.

[2]Hos. 3.4.

[3]Snith, The Religion of the Semites, p. 203-204.

[4]Ibid

[5]Hos. 9.2; 8.15.

teraphim necessary adjuncts of the worship of Yahweh[1]. Isaiah is in sympathy with the reforms abolishing the brazen serpent and images and idols connected with the worship of other gods or demons[2], and the worship of oaks or terebinths[3], but regards the massebah as necessary to the worship of Yahweh.[4]

"It is in the reign of Josiah, toward the close of the seventh century, that we first meet with the effective and comprehensive condemnation of images of every sort, including the massebah, in the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah and in the action of the Kings, with the counsel of prophets and priests, (II Kg. 23)[5]. The protest of the writer of Deuteronomy against the massebah is largely due to his strong anti-foreign prejudice[6]: "And ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their asherim

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[1]Hos. 3.9.

[2]Isa. 17.8; 30.22; 2.8.

[3]Isa. 1.29.

[4]Isa. 19.19.

[5]Peters, Religion of the Hebrews, p. 101.

[6]Dt. 12.3.

with fire'."

A few of the cult shrines had previously been destroyed by Hezekiah[1] (720 B.C.) who "removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah", but that the effects of the reforms of Hezekiah were not lasting can be surmised from later reforms of Josiah[2], (621 B.C.). Among one of the reforms of Hezekiah was the breaking of the brazen Serpent "Nehushtan" unto whom "The children of Israel did burn incense". Supporting the worship of this serpent "Nehushtan" is the discovery at Gezer of a brazen serpent in an enclosed circular structure west of the alignment of stones.[3]

Returning to the study of the high place at Gezer, one may observe a means of worship which was common

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[1]II Kg. 19.4.

[2]II Kg. 23.

[3]Macalister, Excavations of Gezer;
The possible tradition of Moses in the wilderness (Nu. 21.9) accounts of Moses encouraging the people to worship a bronze serpent to withstay pestilence.

among all people - the altar. The northern Semites and the Arabs set up an altar of a simple stone or Carin at which the blood of the victim was shed.[2] From the nature of the altar it is evident that the altar and the massebah were the same, serving one purpose. But when Hebrews adopted Canaanite rites of sacrifice, including the various classes of sacrifice - "whole burnt offerings, votive and thank offerings, and peace offerings; to which were added later sin and guilt offerings"[1], various types of altars became necessary. Hosea, among the earliest of the canonical prophets, mentions the numerousness of the altars which have been set up, and condemns them because they have led to lawlessness and immoral conduct: "Ephraim hath multiplied altars to sin; for sin his altars serve him".[3] Amos for a similar reason despises the altars of the high places, for what they represent. "Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years,

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[1] Gen. 31.45-46; Ex. 20.25; I Sam. 14.23; R. Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 202.

[2] Peters, Religion of the Hebrews, p. 118.

[3] Hos. 8.11.

O house of Israel?"[1] - implying an answer of "No". "I hate I despise your (slaughter) feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn (hilarious) assemblies. Yea though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offering of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice (mishpat) roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."[2]

At Taanach in a private home of the eighth and seventh centuries a terra cotta altar was found which was elaborately decorated having on two of its sides figures of Cherubim (a combination of human heads and wings) and lions, on the third side a combination figure of a man, a snake, a tree and two gazelles.[3]

Another type of altar was one upon which incense was burned[4]. It is evidently of heathen origin, for

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[1] Am. 5.25.

[2] Am. 5.21-24.

[3] As well as serving as an altar, this object also suggests the custom of the worship of certain animals. The worship of Sacred animals will be discussed later.

[4] Gen. 8.21.

Josiah in his reform "put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained bo burn incense in the high places found about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon; and to the planets, and to all the hosts of heaven".[1] Incense altars were in use before the monarchial period, at the time of the early Israelite occupation near the tenth century B.C. One such incense altar was of limestone found at Tell Beit Mirisim[2]. Similar limestone altars were found at Shechem and Megiddo belonging to the seventh century[3]. A jar of incense was found at Gezer[4] in the level corresponding to about the year 1000 B.C. Although there is no reference to the use of incense or censers in the Old Testament prior to the time of Jeremiah from the evidence of incense altars found in Hebrew strata, one can safely infer that the Hebrews used incense at least from the date 1000 B.C., which

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[1] II Kg. 23.5.

[2] Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible, p. 108.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Macalister, Excavations of Gezer, Vol. II, p. 425.

use of Incense altars in worship was a practice adopted from the Canaanites.

In the Astarte Temple of Armageddon (800 B.C.)[1] near three limestone altars were lying fragments of terra cotta incense altars representing shrines with windows. "One had animal figures on the sides and heads of Astarte at the front upper corners: the other was smaller and simpler - - -. Several figures of Astarte were found on the summit and on the Eastern slope - - -. Thus stratum III represents a time when Hebrews during one of their lapses from the worship of Yahweh, gave their allegiance to Astarte."

This brings us naturally to the discussion of Astarte whose worship was so prevalent during the Hebrews' existence in Palestine, being found in not a few of the high places. This worship of Astarte was extremely sexual[2] emphasizing the maternal functions of

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[1] C. Fisher, Art., "The Excavation of Armageddon", The Oriental Institute of the Univ. Chicago, Mar. 1929.

[2] The most common image symbolizing the Astarte at Taanach, Megiddo, Gath, Lachish, Gezer and Beth-Shemesh were of terra cotta and clay, generally nude with prominent hips and breasts, the hands either placed on the breasts or outstretched. See also Macalister, Excavations at Gezer, p. 415.

the deity, and was responsible for the liscentiousness among both men and women protested against in Hosea[1] and Amos[2]. Jeremiah[3] at the time just before the reforms of Josiah, despaired of finding a single bare height which had escaped this prostitution. At the same time we hear the Deuteronomist[4] demanding that "There shall be no Kedeshah of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a Kadeshah of the sons of Israel, Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot, or the wages of a dog, unto the house of Yahweh thy God for any vow". "A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Yahweh."

Such religious rites were among those which were partially supressed by Asa[5] and finally fairly well

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[1]Hos. 4.14; 5.1.

[2]Am. 2.7; Gen. 38.21; I Kg. 22.38; I Sam. 2.22; Jud.13.2.

[3]Jer. 3.26; See also II Kg. 21.7.

[4]Dt. 23.18; and 22.5.

[5]I Kg. 14.24; 15.12.

crushed by Josiah[1] "And he (Josiah) brake down the houses of the Sodomites (sacred men and women) that were in the house of Yahweh, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah". The Asherah erected besides the altar of Yahweh[2] was considered to be a symbol of the fertility cult.

Other objects of worship, found in the caves of Gezer, need be mentioned only in passing - such as the small images used probably as votive offerings[3], some made in the form of beasts, and others resembling the human figure[4], the finest of them being overlaid with gold and silver[5]; the small seated figures of pottery and amulets which served as charms and exhibited their power in connection with curses[6] and blessings.

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[1]II Kg. 23.7.

[2]Dt. 16.21.

[3]Macalister, Excavations of Gezer, p. 416, and plate CCXXII Vol. III;
Dt. 7.5; 12.3; Jud.3.19; Isa. 10.10.

[4]Isa. 19.13.

[5]Jud. 17.3,4; Jer. 10.14.

[6]Jud. 17.

There are many religious practices of the people which could profitably be brought into the picture. But there are two which are of exceptional significance which will occupy the remainder of this chapter - the practice of human sacrifice and the worship of sacred animals.

Human sacrifice as we are aware was practised among the Canaanites. Dr. W. F. Bade argues that the Hebrews knew nothing of human sacrifice until it was introduced to them upon their immigration into Palestine. Once acquainted with it as a part of the sacrifical rites to the gods, they seem ordinarily to have used it only in times of stress. The narrative of Jephthah in the eleventh chapter of Judges certainly suggests the probability of human sacrifice in an early period.[1] In this narrative Jephthah actually uttered the vow before Yahweh at Mizpah, that if Yahweh would deliver the children of Ammon into his hands "whatsoever (whosever) cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of

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[1]Sanctioned by Yahweh in Ex. 13.12.

Ammon, it shall be Yahweh's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering". Here there is a definite idea that some human being will "come forth" from his house. A household pet would not be considered in such a vital event.

Definite references to the kings who offered such sacrifices are made in the historical books. Hiel sacrificed his two sons, his first born and youngest in rebuilding the walls of Jericho[1], supposedly because of a curse upon the wall.[2] Ahaz, during his reign, caused his son to pass through the fire "according to the abominations of the nations".[3] The center of such sacrifices as recognized in Biblical sources as related to religious ceremonies was the valley of Tophet or Ge-Ben-Himmon, just under the walls of Jerusalem where a temple was built to Molech, containing its representative altars, priests and prophets. Here apparently the practice of human sacrifice was a common occurence, the children being "passed through

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[1] I Kg. 16.34.

[2] Josh. 6.26.

[3] II Kg. 16.3.

the fire" to Molech[1]. It is believed that the child was first slain and then burned on the altar or the funeral pyre[2]. Another custom was that of passing the child over the fire in a purification ceremony.[3]

Another means of discovering the practice of human sacrifice is through the protests of the prophets. "Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"[4] protests Micah; and Jeremiah laments that they "have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt offerings unto Baal; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it unto my mind".[5] Deuteronomy also protests against such practices - "Thou shalt not do so unto Yahweh thy God: for every abomination to Yahweh, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters

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[1]Jeremiah leaves no doubt in our mind that by the people at large this service was thought to belong to Yahweh, Jer. 23.35.

[2]Isa. 57.5.

[3]Dt. 18.10.

[4]Mic. 6.7.

[5]Jer. 19.5; 32.35.

do they burn in the fire to their gods."[1]

Archaeology substantiates these references in the Bible. Especially has this been brought to light through the excavations at Gezer. In Cave No. 1 at Gezer, in the north east corner, a depression was cut out in the rock in which were found the decapitated skull of a man and the remains of two children, one being a girl of six years. In other parts of the cave numerous jars containing infant skeletons, covered with earth and often including jars of food, were found interred in the ground. Directly east of the cave was uncovered a bell shaped cistern. The floor of this cistern was covered by a two foot stratum of aluvium, succeeded by a similiar stratum of bones and large stones intermingled and repeated for several layers, the whole being capped by loose dry earth and washed by perculating water. The bones were those of human beings of both sexes and all ages, and of animals mixed. It is thought by Macalister[2] that this cistern served

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[1] Dt. 12.31. See also Lev. 18. 21; 20.2-5.

[2] Macalister, Excavations at Gezer, p. 399 and 401.

as a receptacle for the bodies of unburnt sacrifices. In fact, according to Macalister, the whole area of the high place is a cemetry for new born infants, the victims of sacrifices.

In Cave II 3 A in Gezer, remains of human sacrifices have been discovered. Human sacrifice as a foundation offering is typical in the instance of the skeleton of a woman of advanced years found deposited in a hollow at the corner of a building. She had been deliberately placed on her back with her legs doubled, and between them were two jars for provisions[1]. Under the threshold was a popular place for the burial of the sacrificed victims, for the threshold was the entrance to the sacred family hearth. The spirit of the victim would act as protector both to the building and to its inmates.

Thus the practise of human sacrifice, a probable influence from Canaan, was not an aid to the moral development of the Hebrews. One wonders if it would be possible for the Hebrews to accept such rites without having been previously acquainted with them in the desert:

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[1]Macalister, Excavations at Gezer, p. 407.

but when one realizes the fierce nature of the nomadic people it becomes less difficult to understand their acceptance of such a custom.

Finally let us observe that part which animals played in the popular religion of the Hebrews. That their significance can be traced back to an early date is evidenced through Biblical narratives and Archaeological discoveries.

In Numbers the ninth chapter[1] there is represented an ancient Yahweh-religion assimilating ancient customary rites and transforming them to harmonize with their own spirit. Here in Numbers is a special ceremony in which a red cow[2] without blemish and one never having borne a yoke is burnt completely and all together, as a whole burnt offering to Yahweh. In the account in Numbers there is mentioned a priest who takes some of the blood

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[1] Read also Dt. 21 in which a heifer which has never been used for any profane work is brought to a running stream and slain to appease Yahweh for the murder of a man whose murderer cannot be found.

[2] This idea is taken from Julius A. Bewer, Art., "The Original Significance of the Rite of the Red Cow in Numbers XIX", J. B. L., Vol. 24-25, 1905-6. See also Macalister, Excavations at Gezer, p. 315.

and sprinkles it seven times toward the sanctuary. While the cow is being burnt, the priest adds cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet thread, throwing them into the fire. As in similar cases, the additions of the priestly participation is of a later date, and the ceremony evidently is a survival of primitive times when the people themselves burnt the sacrifice consuming every portion of the animal. "The fact that the ashes are used for purification from uncleanness contracted by contact with the dead, points in the direction of a sacrifice to the demons or spirits of the dead."

In primitive times the whole burnt offering of a red cow was made when death occured in the family, the offering being made to the spirits of the dead: "then the ashes, being regarded as sacred, were used for getting rid of the taboo with which men and things had become infected. "The Jahve-religion incorporated this ancient offering into its cultus, and in doing so transformed it and lost the old conception completely; but there remained indications that it was originally

not connected with Jahve's sanctuary and religion."[1]

This Cult of the Dead[2] was a part of Hebrew popular religion as we can see it through the commands of Deuteronomy. In Dt. 26.14 there is a legislation against any one paying a part of his tithe to the dead. Again in Dt. 14.1 we read "ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead". Archaeology has shown us the offerings of food, pottery ornaments and weapons which were found buried with the dead for their use.

This idea of animals being the spirits of deceased men is in all probability one reason[3] why some animals were considered unclean[4]. One such animal says H.P. Smith[5] is the mouse which is definitely connected with

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[1]J. A. Bewer, Art., "The Original Significance of the Rite of the Red Cow in Numbers XIX", J. B. L., 1905-6.

[2]Gen. 35.8,19; 23.17; 25.9.

[3]Another reason is the association of animals with other gods - H. P. Smith, the Religion of Israel, p. 33.

[4]See list of unclean animals in Lev. 11.29-38.

[5]Art., "Animal Sources of Pollution", J. B. L., Vol. 30-31, 1911-12.

the dead. "When the witch is asleep, her soul issues from her body in the form of a red mouse." According to Smith this connection of the mouse with the dead probably can be traced back to early Semitic origins.[1] The mouse is so associated with the souls of the dead because of its mysterious character. "The mouse is a night-roaming animal; it appears and disappears suddenly and mysteriously; it haunts houses; it seeks and yet shuns the company of man; it seems to come from the ground, the dwelling place of the shades; its voice is a squeak or chirp such as might plausibly be attributed to the disembodied spirit. In fact, the ghosts who are consulted by the necromancers give their responses in a chirp or twitter."[2]

Swine likewise were included in the abomination of Yahweh as was the mouse.[3] Here we have a particular case in which the animal was sacred to the goddess of

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[1] R. Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 293 speaks of the mouse as being an animal of strict taboo.

[2] Isa. 8.19; 29.4.
There is a tradition in ancient Israel of a trespass offering of golden images of mice accompanied by images of tumors given to Yahweh by the Philistines - I Sam. 6.4,5.

[3] Isa. 65.3,4,17; 66.3,17.

other nations - namely to Aphrodite, Astarte and the divinities of Cyprus and of Greece[1]. That swine were used in the sacrifices of Pre-Israelite Palestine we know from the presence of the bones of swine with those of sheep, kine and camels in the temple of Gezer.

Certain animals were often considered as sacred due to a carry over of Primitive times in which super-human knowledge was attributed to them. Such an animal was the bull. The bull is thought to be a contribution of the Canaanites, for it certainly is not of Nomadic origin. It appears that the story of Aron and the golden calf[2] is an improbability, simply a putting of present customs back into past narratives, for it is absurd to think of cattle being raised on the barren desert. It is more likely that the bull is of northern origin - of Asia Minor or of northern Syria[3]. It was a common object of worship among agricultural Semites. The bull being thus a representative deity of

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[1]Ira M. Price, Art., "Swine in the Old Testament Taboo", J. B. L., Vol. 44-45, 1925-6.

[2]Ex. 32 - a record of E.

[3]The Bull was the chief deity of the Hittites.

an agricultural land, and symbolizing strength, its worship taken over by the Hebrews.[1] (It is interesting to note here that the Calf worship was more widely known in the northern kingdom than in the southern. In fact its only mention in Southern traditions is the reference to it as a decoration in Solomon's Temple.[2]) On the other hand the calf worship was set up in the northern kingdom by Jeroboam[3] (937 B.C.), and its fame was spread throughout the land. Hosea preached against the Calf worship of Ephraim[4] only[5]. He pronounced doom upon those who worshiped Yahweh in the form of silver and golden images. The mention of the strength of Yahweh in comparison to that of the wild ox, in the book of Numbers[6], is a combined JE record. In the high places

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[1]The Bull was worshipped as a representative of Yahweh the god of fertility.

[2]I Kg. 7.25; II Kg. 16.17; Jer. 52.20. A mention is made in J document of "molten images" - Ex. 34.17.

[3]II Kg. 10.29; II Chr. 11.14,15.

[4]Hos. 12.11; 8.5; 13.2.

[5]Passages mentioning Judah in connection with Calf worship are glosses or interpolations. Stronger evidence of the fact that Calf worship was not practised in the South, as suggested by G. P. Hedley, is the fact that no reference is made to it by the prophets of Jerusalem.

[6]Nu. 23.22; see also 24.8.

uncovered by Archaeology there were found bull figures,[1] but relatively few in the strate representing this period. It appears therefore that Calf worship was practised, although somewhat rarely in the north, and probably that little was known of it in the Southern Kingdom.[2]

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[1] Macalister, Excavations at Gezer, p. 280-281.

[2] Other animals mentioned in Biblical literature are the horse - II Kg. 23.11; Ass (borrowed from Egypt) - Nu. 22.28; Gen. 49.14; and the lion. In the Canaanite level (ca 1400 B.C.) there was found a stone table of offerings with three lions carved in relief stretched out around the rim (of Egyptian influence) - see Bulletin of Am. Sch. Oriental Research, Oct. 1930, Art. by Prof. Albright. Special mention is made by Dr. Wm. F. Bade in his recent Special Report of "Some Tombs of Tell En-Nasbeh", 1931 (p. 32) of the significance of certain animals carved on Egyptian Scarabs found in Tomb 5.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

In the study of this material one naturally arrives at several definite conclusions. In the first place there remains a consciousness of the extant of the subject in hand, enabling one to give only a general survey of the whole field. On the other hand too inclusive a study is not wholly possible on account of the independability of Archaeology and also of Biblical sources, the latter being often only traditional. But despite this lack many instances are known in which Archaeology has substantiated Biblical records, giving a clue to the actual practises of certain times.

Another inference drawn is that the worship of the Hebrews, was not necessarily, in the light of their standards, immoral, and that many of their practises considered unseemly in the light of today, held for them real religious significance. A quotation from a

paragraph or two from Olmstead[1] will bring out more clearly my meaning.

"It is only too true that this worship of the country side was far from ideal. 'On every high hill and under every green tree' were performed those rites in which sexual impurity found a place, and the prophets had long remonstrated against other abuses. But all was not unclean. At Hebron and Beersheba lingered traditions of a loved and glorious past, when Abraham had been friend of God. If the worship of Yahweh as a young bull at Bethel had provoked indignation of the advanced thinkers, few could forget that here Jacob saw the road to heaven, and the burning of human bones on its altar was pure sacrilege. To many a thinking and pious Hebrew, Josiah's reform must have appeared the utter negation of all that was best in the nation's past."

"Religion had been a vital part of the peasant's life. Slaughter of a sheep was sacrifice to Yahweh, and his simple meal might be blessed by the presence of his

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[1]Olmstead, A History of Palestine and Syria, pp. 502 and 504.

God; when he brought to the local shrines his first fruits, he 'rejoiced, before Yahweh's face'. His priests were of his own class, the local seer found his strayed asses at small cost, the 'man of God,' scarce more than a wandering dervish, shared his frugal meal and blessed him.

"Now all was changed. His friends, the local priests, were dead or nonentities in the capital (after the reforms of Josiah), his first fruits eaten by strangers. By the new mode, he could be religious only in Jerusalem and then only at the three yearly feasts (Legislations of Deuteronomy). He must tramp the unspeakable trails on foot and under the blazing sun at an expense which, however small, was too great for his scanty means, and then worship with strangers. Intimate relation between official religion and the home life was broken and forever. The peasant became 'pagan', one of the 'people of the land', as they were stigmatised by the officially 'Pious'. All opportunity for influence by the advanced thinkers was lost when Josiah's reform snapped the connection between the official cult and the daily life of the peasant."

Finally, the most significant conclusion is the realization of a slow and natural development in the progress of Hebrew religion. In the nomadic stage religion was moulded by the social and economic conditions in which the Semitic nomads existed. This nomadic religion, in coming in contact with a higher agricultural civilization, very slowly but none the less surely absorbed the new practises which were necessitated (according to the primitive Semitic mind) by the new environment of an Agricultural society. This synthetic religion, an inevitable combination of Semitic and Canaanite elements, was to be carried on even into the centuries A.D., and continually undergoing modifications with the ever changing conditions of society.

Thus, starting from the premise that man is naturally religious, one is helped to the realization that religion is not the dictate of God superimposed upon a people, but the product of man in adjusting himself to his environment.

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